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# Masaba language

**Masaba** (*Lumasaaba*), sometimes known as **Gisu** (*Lugisu*) after one of its dialects, is a Bantu language spoken by more than two million people in East Africa. Gisu dialect in eastern Uganda is mutually intelligible with Bukusu, spoken by ethnic Luhya in western Kenya. *Masaba* is the local name of Mount Elgon and the name of the son of the ancestor of the Gisu tribe. Like other Bantu languages, Lumasaba nouns distinguish large set of noun class. This is similar to how gender is used in many Germanic and Romance languages, except that instead of the usual two or three, there are around eighteen different noun classes. The language has a quite complex verb morphology.

| Masaba | |
|---|---|
| Lumasaba | |
| **Native to** | Uganda |
| **Region** | Eastern, south of the Kupsabiny, Bugisu Province |
| **Ethnicity** | Masaba, Luhya |
| **Native speakers** | 2.7 million (2002 & 2009 censuses)[1] |
| **Language family** | Niger–Congo<br>▪ Atlantic–Congo<br>▪ Volta-Congo<br>▪ Benue–Congo<br>▪ Bantoid<br>▪ Southern Bantoid<br>▪ Bantu<br>▪ Northeast Bantu<br>▪ Great Lakes Bantu<br>▪ Masaba–Luhya (J.30)<br>▪ **Masaba** |
| **Dialects** | Gisu<br>Kisu<br>Bukusu<br>Syan<br>Tachoni<br>Dadiri<br>Buya |
| **Language codes** | |
| **ISO 639-3** | Variously:<br>`myx` – Masaba (Gisu, Kisu, Dadiri, Buya)<br>`bxk` – Bukusu (Tachoni)<br>`lts` – Tachoni |

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## Varieties

Varieties of Masaba are as follows:[6]

- Gisu (*Lugisu*)
- Kisu
- Bukusu (*Lubukusu*; ethnic Luhya)
- Syan
- Tachoni (*Lutachoni*; ethnic Luhya)
- Dadiri (*Ludadiri*)
- Buya (*Lubuya*)

Dadiri is spoken in the north, Gisu in the center, and Buya in the center and south of Masaba territory in Uganda. Bukusu is spoken in Kenya, separated from ethnic Masaba by Nilotic languages on the border.

## Phonology

See Bukusu dialect for details of one variety of Masaba.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Glottolog** | masa1299 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/masa1299) Masaaba[2] buku1249 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/buku1249) Bukusu[3] tach1242 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/tach1242) Tachoni[4] |
| **Guthrie code** | JE.31[5] |

### Consonants

| | | Labial | Alveolar | Palatal | Velar |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Nasal** | | m | n | | ŋ |
| **Plosive** | **voiceless** | p | t | | k |
| | **voiced** | b | d | | g |
| **Fricative** | **voiceless** | f | s | | |
| | **voiced** | β | z | | |
| **Approximant** | | | l | j | |

### Vowels

Masaba has a basic 5-vowel system consisting of /i, e, a, o, u/.

## References


1. Masaba (Gisu, Kisu, Dadiri, Buya) (https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/myx/) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
   Bukusu (Tachoni) (https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/bxk/) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
   Tachoni (https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/lts/) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Masaaba" (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/masa1299). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Bukusu" (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/buku1249). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
4. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Tachoni" (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/tach1242). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
5. Jouni Filip Maho, 2009. New Updated Guthrie List Online (https://web.archive.org/web/20180203191542/http://goto.glocalnet.net/mahopapers/nuglonline.pdf)
6. Maho (2009)


## Bibliography


- Brown, Gillian (1972) *Phonological Rules and Dialectal Variation: A study of the phonology of Lumasaaba* ISBN 0-521-08485-7


## External links

- Kulomba Kwikumutikinyi (http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/Uganda/masaba.html) Portions of the Book of Common Prayer in Masaba (1907) digitized by Richard Mammana and Charles Wohlers

- http://open-chapel.com/scripture/language-preservation/lumasaaba-language-study/ Learning Lumasaaba by Catherine Mabongor

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